

Case Study: The Benefits of Getting It All Out in the Open



Meet Elaine Vance from Donegal, who milks 215 cows, owns 200 acres of family farmland and rents 150 more. Elaine farms with her Dad Geoffrey and her husband Robert and she has three small children. Her family relationships have benefitted from strong communication.

The natural successor

Elaine, who has a PhD from Queens University in Dairy Production Systems, always showed an interest in the farm, making her the natural successor. Despite this, Elaine feels strongly that you can't underestimate the importance of everyone's needs being discussed openly. Even if only one person is genuinely interested in the farm, it's still the family home which makes it an emotional issue.

“When we first spoke to *ifac*, it was honed into us to talk about what everybody's needs are from the family farm. That was something we did, so that everybody knew what everybody's wishes were, and nobody was in the dark about anything.”

Discussing every last detail

Good communication is crucial, and Elaine and her family talked through everything – the farmhouse, how her parents would be cared for when they were elderly, what her parents needed as regards income and what Elaine's family needed as an income. They

also talked about what her parents wanted for her siblings and what her siblings wanted for themselves.

Don't assume you have loads of time

In Elaine's experience, succession can take longer than you expect, even if you're organised. “It took time; this was down to the fact that we had a very complicated structure that took time to work through and come up with a plan that was best for everybody.” The more time you give your succession process, the better the outcome.

Advice to other farmers looking into succession

Elaine's main advice is to get professional advice. It's the best way to “*get the structure right...and do it as efficiently as you possibly can.*”



The Vance's Farm in Donegal